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ARTICLES:

- (1) US beef imports to resume; Anxiety, distrust likely to put dent in distribution

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Slightly abridged)
July 27, 2006

The government will today decide to resume US beef imports for the second time about six months after a second ban was imposed,

following the discovery of vertebral columns in shipment early this year. Beef trade will make a quiet start without fanfare, unlike the case last December. Instead, due to growing doubts about the safety of US beef, imports will resume amid small expectations and great anxieties.

Importers remain cautious for fear of incurring losses; Meat that has not cleared customs continues to be held in storage

Explanations

Officials from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) yesterday reported at the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Headquarters at Nagata-cho, Tokyo, on prior inspections of US meatpackers authorized to export products to Japan they carried out in June and July. Participants from an LDP subcommittee raised their voices every now and then, "If there is another blunder regarding the imports of US beef, the Japanese market will be closed completely."

The inspections conducted by MAFF and the MHLW found that one meatpacker had exported beef from cattle processed before it obtained authorization from the US government last December when beef trade was reinstated. However, both ministries conveyed their decision to allow this company to resume exports to Japan subject to a condition.

Disagreeing with this policy, the LDP's side suspended a conclusion by its subcommittee for the time being.

The panel met again in the evening. Officials from both ministries explained in detail such circumstances as that one meatpacker exported beef it processed before obtaining Japan-bound export

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authorization and the product has already been shipped to the domestic market. LDP members then laid aside their objections and approved beef exports by 34 facilities.

The beef import resumption issue this time has evoked the impression that US members of Congress from the ruling and opposition parties have wrench-opened the Japanese market with the off-year election just ahead in November. Japanese consumer distrust in the safety of US beef, however, is growing even more, compared to last year, when imports were resumed.

Request

Mindful of the wishes of consumers, the LDP made another request to both ministries regarding about 830 tons of beef worth 800 million yen which arrived in Japan after the second ban was placed last December and since then, have been held in storage at warehouses at domestic ports.

The government intended to start inspections of those products soon after beef trade was reinstated and ship them to domestic markets. However, the LDP called on the government to reassure the beef import resumption issue will go smoothly before authorizing imports of beef that have not cleared customs. Since the LDP wants the government to test the water for about three months after the resumption of imports, this meat will not be allowed in until mid-November.

An official of the Japan Association of Beef Importers and Exporters consisting of domestic trading companies complained about the measure proposed by the LDP. The price of the beef that has not cleared customs will be beaten down. In addition to that, if imports are delayed three months, its freshness date will expire, causing further losses. The association has requested the US government buy back the products, but it turned down the requests straight away.

Wrapping themselves up in suspicion, many retailers and restaurant chains are cautious about selling US beef even after the ban was removed. As a result, more retailers will refrain from importing US beef, putting a dent in the amount of beef shipped to the domestic markets.

Impact

Yoshinoya D&C, a beef-bowl restaurant chain, will put beef bowls back on its menu a month and a half to two months after the resumption of US beef imports. However, since the type of meat used for beef bowls is now rather expensive and the volume of import is small, it will sell beef bowls for only a limited time or over a certain period. Previously Yoshinoya directly purchased beef from a US meat company. US meat companies will not sell such beef separately, because special specifications will be adopted for Japan-bound exports. Yoshinoya will have to purchase beef through importers. If only a few retailers handle US beef, the amount available will be limited and therefore affect the period of sales of beef bowls.

The barbecue industry had expected the price of tongues, which has been static at a high level, to drop. However, it is inconceivable that the price will decline if the shipment volume is small.

(2) Enemy base strike argument lacks substance

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ASAHI (Page 4) (Abridged)
July 27, 2006

In the wake of the missile launches by North Korea on July 5, many cabinet ministers and opposition party executives suggested the option of Japan having the capability of striking enemy bases. The government indicated that attacking enemy bases was legally possible. But in reality, such is next to impossible because Japan does not have the proper equipment. Based on another misconception, Japan was also accused of mulling a preemptive strike. Some also questioned the appropriateness of the enemy base strike argument that emerged at a time when China and other countries are trying to convince North Korea to return to the six-party talks.

At what point should Japan make a decision?

"People should read reports correctly about what I said in a press conference. It is clear that discussion is being conducted in line with the nation's exclusively defense-oriented policy."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe in a press conference yesterday exhibited displeasure with former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki, who had expressed in a speech concern over enemy strike statements by Abe and others.

Shortly after the North test-launched its missiles, Abe and Defense Agency Director-General Fukushima Nukaga cited the government's view about possessing an enemy strike capability. Abe and Nukaga's comments drew criticism from home and abroad. South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun accused them of being supportive of a preemptive strike.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi declared in a press conference on July 17 after the G8 summit in Russia: "Japan has no intention of launching a preemptive strike against any country." Koizumi apparently intended to dispel any suspicions about Japan.

The government's position is that attacking an enemy base and launching a preemptive strike are two different concepts.

Based on former Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama's 1956 statement, the government's view has been that: (1) it is an act of self-defense to strike an enemy base once that country began making preparations for attacking Japan with the use of missiles or other weapons; and (2) it is unconstitutional to launch a preemptive strike against a country that is feared might attack Japan.

But in 1999, then defense chief Hosei Norota replied that in some cases, it was lawful to strike an enemy base as soon as that country began making preparations for an armed attack before Japan actually suffers any damage. Determining exactly at what point an enemy country had begun making preparations for an attack is a tough

question. The Defense Agency holds that it will determine such on a case-by-case basis, based on the international situation and the motives of an enemy country. But the option of pounding an enemy base before Japan suffers damage is not ruled out altogether. Abe explained: "In reality, it is extremely difficult to determine at what point an enemy began making preparations (for an attack). Chances are that a decision will be made only after a missile lands in Japan and causes damage." It seems difficult for Japan to launch a strike before suffering damage.

Necessary equipment

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Is Japan capable of attacking enemy bases?

In line with its strictly defense-oriented policy, Japan has regarded it unconstitutional to possess attack weapons, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range bombers, and attack aircraft carriers. Japan does not have the capability to strike enemy missile bases or other facilities.

As necessary equipment, Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya cited: (1) long-range aircraft; (2) a capability to attack an enemy base from outside the tracking range of the enemy country; and (3) a capability to jam and destroy other countries' aircraft detection radar systems.

The agency is scheduled to deploy an aerial refueling plane at the end of the current fiscal year, which will help prolong the endurance of F-2 and F-15 fighters.

But a defense official took this view: "It will take time for Japan to acquire all equipment independently. We will have to rely on the US military when it comes to gathering intelligence on enemy bases."

Why at this point?

In the wake of North Korea's missile launches on July 5, Nukaga mentioned the enemy attack argument ahead of other cabinet ministers. He was also serving as defense chief when Pyongyang launched a Taepodong-1 in 1998. Behind Nukaga's controversial statement lies a growing threat from the North, which has succeeded in test-launching Rodong and Scud missiles to a certain extent. Foreign Minister Taro Aso and Abe followed suit and made similar statements.

President Ichiro Ozawa of the largest opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) criticized their argument as absurd. But Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama insisted that Japan's exclusively

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defense-oriented policy allowed the country to target enemy bases.

The argument also drew strong backlashes from South Korea and China.

Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, one of the post-Koizumi contenders, called for cautious discussion from a broad perspective for the sake of confidence building with neighboring countries.

Former LDP Secretary General Koichi Kato said in a speech: "Japan, a mature international power, must have the sense to conduct wide-ranging diplomatic activities after taking punitive action instead of just making fuss over the North's audacious action."

(3) Japanese, Chinese foreign ministers agree to cooperate on early restart of 6-party talks with North Korea; China touches on Yasukuni Shrine issue

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
Evening, July 27, 2006

By Toyofumi Amano in Kuala Lumpur

Foreign Minister Taro Aso, now visiting Malaysia, met this morning with China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, and the two agreed to

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work closely together toward an early resumption of six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue. Foreign Minister Li also brought up the issue of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi paying homage at Yasukuni Shrine.

Prior to their meeting, Aso also met with South Korea's Trade and Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon, and the two affirmed their cooperation to carry out the resolution against North Korea adopted by the United Nations Security Council.

In his meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Li, Aso proposed anew that a foreign ministerial meeting be held at the ARF in Malaysia by the participants of the six-party talks, including North Korea. But afterward, Aso told the press corps that he could not get confirmation from the Chinese foreign minister for such a meeting at the ARF.

(4) Taku Yamasaki's opinion on Yasukuni issue: Secular national war memorial should be built

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
July 26, 2006

Questioner: What is your basic view about Yasukuni Shrine?

Yamasaki: I recognize Yasukuni Shrine as one of the facilities commemorating the war dead. However, the Emperor does not visit the shrine, and there are objections to the prime minister's paying homage there. The victims of war, excluding the spirits of the war dead, are not enshrined. I would like to build a facility at which all the Japanese people and the leaders of foreign countries will be able to express their condolences to those who died in national affairs.

Questioner: Do you mean that there are limits to Yasukuni Shrine?

Yamasaki: One of Yasukuni Shrine's limits is that it is a religious facility for worshiping Shinto gods. It is desirable to build a secular war memorial facility.

Questioner: What do you think about a view calling for expanding Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery?

Yamasaki: Making that cemetery into a war memorial is one option. But a council should be formed so that a suitable place for a war memorial would be picked. There is one view for building a war memorial at the Kitanomaru Park and another for building it at Shinjuku-gyoen.

Questioner: What about the call for removing the Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni Shrine?

Yamasaki: I think the Class-A war criminals should be un-enshrined from Yasukuni Shrine. It is abnormal that the Emperor cannot visit the shrine. If the Class-A war criminals were separated from the shrine, the barrier preventing the prime minister and foreign dignitaries from visiting there would be lowered. There is an argument about whether Yasukuni visits by the prime minister violate the constitutional rule of separation of state and religion, but the external problems would disappear.

Questioner: What do you think about criticism of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East?

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Yamasaki: Japan's postwar period started at a time when Japan accepted the Tokyo Tribunal and the San Francisco Treaty. If we now deny those two events, the soul of Japan would be cut adrift. Doing so, the country may again go down a wrong path. If the Pacific War

is no longer seen as a mistaken war, Japan's colonial rule and war of aggression would be denied.

Questioner: In December 2004 when you served as prime ministerial assistant, you sounded Yasukuni Shrine Chief Priest Toshiaki Nanbu out on the disenshrinement of Class-A war criminals from the shrine, didn't you? Do you have an intention to ask him again?

Yamasaki: I have no such an intention. I learned a lesson from that. He showed me that his determination not to do so was as hard as a rock. Former LDP Secretary General Makoto Koga, chairman of the Japan War-Bereaved Association, has advocated separate enshrinement. I cannot do what Mr. Koga himself cannot do.

Questioner: How about making Yasukuni a non-religious organization and then separating the Class-A war criminals from the facility?

Yamasaki: I think Yasukuni would not accept such an idea. More than 30 years ago, there was a suggestion that Yasukuni should be maintained by the state, but that notion soon disappeared. The spirits of war dead did not go to battlefields thinking that they would be enshrined in Yasukuni unconnected with any religious faith.

Questioner: Do you think the Yasukuni issue will become a campaign issue for the LDP presidential election?

Yamasaki: I think so. Presidential candidates must tell truth about whether they will visit the shrine as prime minister. Glossing over (their positions) would lower their value as a politician

Questioner: Do you think the next prime minister should visit Yasukuni Shrine?

Yamasaki: I think the next prime minister should not pay homage at the shrine.

(5) GSDF pullout from Iraq after completing important mission (Part 2): Tension

SANKEI (Page 30) (Full)
July 25, 2006

On Aug. 10, 2004, at 1:45 a.m. Iraq time, three roaring sounds were heard at the Ground Self-Defense Force's camp in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah. Col. Yuki Imaura, 47, who commanded the second contingent of GSDF troops deployed there to assist with Iraq's reconstruction, was still awake on his bed in a bulletproof container at the camp. Imaura did not know why, though. And now, he thinks that it might be his "instinct" as a commanding officer.

There were three shells, all launched from trench mortars, Imaura judged from their flying sounds. Imaura put on his bulletproof jacket and helmet right away, then dashed to the command post 300 meters away from his barracks. He was the first to arrive.

Waiting for his staff to arrive, Imaura first confirmed that there was no damage. After that, he relieved the sentries on the watch at

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four posts on the camp. At the command post, he received reports on the situation.

One of the relieved sentries said he heard five shells. Another said he could hear only two. They differed in what they said. However, Imaura thought that they confused firing sounds, flying sounds, and landing sounds. His ears heard the roaring sounds of three shells. Imaura believed his ears.

Imaura was cool-headed at all times. On Aug. 4, there was a bomb attack in the northern Iraqi city of Najaf. Imaura then felt that the GSDF camp might come under attack in the near future. He therefore conducted antimortar training on Aug. 9.

Meanwhile, Imaura felt that the men in charge of security were becoming tense. One of them wondered, "We're working for Iraq, so I

don't know why we have to come under attack."

It was about a half year after Imaura and his contingent arrived in Iraq, where they worked to assist with Iraq's reconstruction, representing Japan. During that time, their Samawah camp came under mortar attack on April 7 and 29.

On the night of July 14, there was a report from local residents about a potential attack on the GSDF's Samawah camp's Gate 1. The GSDF tightened the camp's security with more barriers set up at all gates. Imaura ordered his staff officers on the watch at each gate to fire in the event their gates were broken through. He stayed awake through the night at the command post.

Nothing happened that night. "I had prepared myself (that night) to become the first commander to use weapons overseas," Imaura said, "and I was thinking about what to say to the press the following day."

On the morning of Aug. 10, after the GSDF camp was attacked, Imaura took the platform in a morning assembly with his men. He was then thinking to himself that he must relieve their tension.

Imaura began with an anecdote of Japan's one-time fleet admiral. "Combined Fleet Commander in Chief Heihachiro Togo in the Battle of the Sea of Japan was lucky," Imaura said to the lined-up GSDF members. He went on: "The good or bad luck of troops is up to their commander. I'm a lucky guy. You all came along with a man of good luck, so I will take you all back home safely."

So saying, Imaura looked around from the platform to see the faces of his men. In his eyes, Imaura saw some of the GSDF members there shedding tears. And then, Imaura became speechless, forgetting himself. "At that moment," he recalled, "I felt we were all one, and I also felt tears welling up."

Japan sent the first batch of GSDF troops to Iraq in January 2004. The GSDF's deployment there continued for two years and a half, during which there were 14 attacks on its Samawah camp and in its environs. However, the GSDF and its members have accomplished their mission, with no one killed or wounded at all. That owes much to the cool-headed judgments of Imaura and all other on-site GSDF commanding officers.

(6) Profile of Makoto Iokibe, 8th National Defense Academy president-designate

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YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
July 27, 2006

Makoto Iokibe, 62, specializes in the history of Japanese politics and diplomacy. He is well known in the press for being outspoken on security issues. He will take over leadership on Aug. 1 of an institution that cultivates and trains Self-Defense Forces (SDF) officers, who will work for Japan's security.

He is regarded as liberal, but some call him a realist. Although he praises SDF operations in Iraq, he has been a critic of the US government's decision to launch the Iraq war. His ability to call a spade a spade has probably increased a feeling of confidence in him. In 2004, he served as a member of the Council for Security and Defense Capability, an advisory panel for Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. It was Koizumi who selected him as president of the National Defense Academy.

Iokibe describes the SDF as the "equipment ready to use to ensure the survival of the Japanese people." In the background, there is his experience in the Osaka-Kobe Earthquake. Although his home was spared, houses surrounding his place were turned into rubble. He also received sad news about some of his students. He felt then that the SDF was the last resort for such disaster help.

In the wake of North Korea's missile launches, the range of security arguments has widened, including calls for possessing the capability

of attacking enemy bases. Iokibe said, "Brave views were raised, but that is the precise time when it is essential we approach issues from a broad perspective." He believes that his mission is to inculcate in the students a historical perspective and to make the SDF into an organization that the public can identify with.

SCHIEFFER